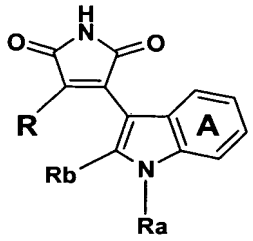
Amendments to the Claims

1. (currently amended) A compound of formula I



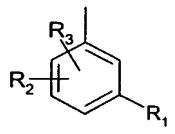
I

wherein

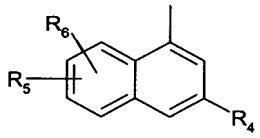
R_a is H; C_{1-4}alkyl; or C_{1-4}alkyl substituted by OH, NH_2, NHC_{1-4}alkyl or ~~$N(di\text{-}C_{1-4}alkyl)_2$~~ $N(C_{1-4}alkyl)_2$;

R_b is H; or C_{1-4}alkyl;

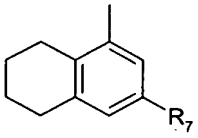
R is a radical of formula (a), (b), (c), ~~(d), (e) or (f)~~ (e) or (f)



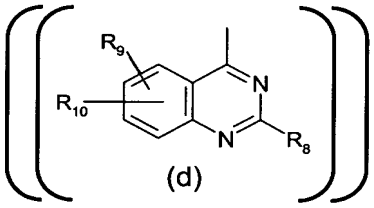
(a)



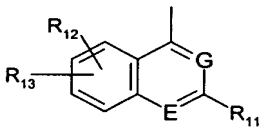
(b)



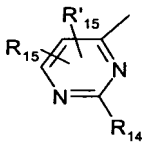
(c)



(d)



(e)



(f)

wherein

~~each of R_1, R_4, R_7, R_8, R_{11} and R_{14} is OH~~ each of R_1, R_4, R_7, R_{11} and R_{14} is OH; SH; a heterocyclic residue; $NR_{16}R_{17}$ wherein each of R_{16} and R_{17}, independently, is H or C_{1-4}alkyl or R_{16} and R_{17} form together with the nitrogen atom to which they are bound a heterocyclic residue; or a radical of formula α

$$-X\text{-}R_c\text{-}Y \qquad (\alpha)$$

wherein X is a direct bond, O, S or NR_{18} wherein R_{18} is H or C_{1-4}alkyl,

R_c is C_{1-4}alkylene or C_{1-4}alkylene wherein one CH_2 is replaced by CR_xR_y wherein one of R_x and R_y is H and the other is CH_3, each of R_x and R_y is CH_3 or R_x and R_y form together $-CH_2-CH_2-$, and

Y is bound to the terminal carbon atom and is selected from OH, a heterocyclic residue and $-NR_{19}R_{20}$ wherein each of R_{19} and R_{20} independently is H, C_{3-6}cycloalkyl, C_{3-6}cycloalkyl-C_{1-4}alkyl, aryl-C_{1-4}alkyl or C_{1-4}alkyl optionally substituted on the terminal

carbon atom by OH, or R_{19} and R_{20} form together with the nitrogen atom to which they are bound a heterocyclic residue;

~~each of R_2, R_3, R_5, R_6, R_9, R_{10}, R_{12}, R_{13}, R_{15} and R'_{15}~~ each of R_2, R_3, R_5, R_6, R_{12}, R_{13}, R_{15} and R'_{15}, independently, is H, halogen, C_{1-4}alkyl, CF_3, OH, SH, NH_2, C_{1-4}alkoxy, C_{1-4}alkylthio, NHC_{1-4}alkyl, ~~$N(di\text{-}C_{1-4}alkyl)_2$~~ $N(C_{1-4}alkyl)_2$ or CN;

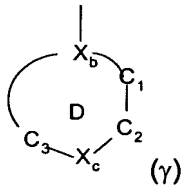
~~either E is -N= and G is -CH= or E is -CH= and G is -N=~~ E is -N= and G is -CH=; and

ring A is optionally substituted,

or a salt thereof.

2. (currently amended) A compound according to claim 1, wherein the heterocyclic residue as ~~R_1, R_4, R_7, R_8, R_{11}, R_{14}~~ R_1, R_4, R_7, R_{11}, R_{14} or Y or formed, respectively, by $NR_{16}R_{17}$ or $NR_{19}R_{20}$, is a three to eight membered saturated, unsaturated or aromatic heterocyclic ring comprising 1 or 2 heteroatoms, and optionally substituted on one or more ring carbon atoms and/or on a ring nitrogen atom when present.

3. (currently amended) A compound according to claim 2 wherein the heterocyclic residue as ~~R_1, R_4, R_7, R_8, R_{11}, R_{14}~~ R_1, R_4, R_7, R_{11}, R_{14} or Y or formed, respectively, by $NR_{16}R_{17}$ or $NR_{19}R_{20}$, is a residue of formula (γ)



(γ)

wherein

the ring D is a 5, 6 or 7 membered saturated, unsaturated or aromatic ring;

X_b is -N-, -C= or -CH-;

X_c is -N=, -NR_f-, -CR_f'= or -CHR_f'- wherein R_f is a substituent for a ring nitrogen atom and is selected from C_{1-6}alkyl; acyl; C_{3-6}cycloalkyl; C_{3-6}cycloalkyl-C_{1-4}alkyl; phenyl; phenyl-C_{1-4}alkyl; a heterocyclic group; and a residue of formula β

$$-R_{21}-Y' \qquad (\beta)$$

wherein R_{21} is C_{1-4}alkylene or C_{2-4}alkylene interrupted by O and Y' is OH, NH_2, $NH(C_{1-4}alkyl)$ or $N(C_{1-4}alkyl)_2$; and R_f' is a substituent for a ring carbon atom and is selected from C_{1-4}alkyl; C_{3-6}cycloalkyl optionally further substituted by C_{1-4}alkyl;  wherein p is 1, 2 or 3; CF_3; halogen; OH; NH_2; -CH_2-NH_2; -CH_2-OH; piperidin-1-yl; and pyrrolidinyl;

the bond between C_1 and C_2 is either saturated or unsaturated;

each of C_1 and C_2, independently, is a carbon atom which is optionally substituted by one or two substituents selected among those indicated above for a ring carbon atom; and

the line between C_3 and X_b and between C_1 and X_b, respectively, represents the number of carbon atoms as required to obtain a 5, 6 or 7 membered ring D.

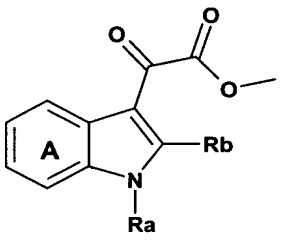
4. (original) A compound according to claim 3, wherein D is a piperazinyl ring optionally C- and/or N-substituted as specified in claim 3.

5. (currently amended) A compound according to claim 1 ~~any of the preceding claims~~ wherein R is a radical of formula ~~(d), (e) or (f)~~ (e) or (f).

6. (canceled)

7. (original) A process for the preparation of a compound of formula I according to claim 1 which process comprises

a) reacting a compound of formula II



(II)

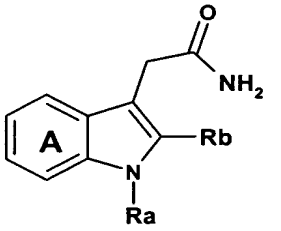
wherein R_a, R_b and ring A are as defined in claim 1,

with a compound of formula III

$$R - CH_2 - CO - NH_2 \qquad (III)$$

wherein R is as defined in claim 1,

b) reacting a compound of formula IV



(IV)

wherein R_a, R_b and ring A are as defined in claim 1,

with a compound of formula V

$$R - CO - CO - OCH_3 \qquad (V)$$

wherein R is as defined in claim 1; or

c) converting in a compound of formula I a substituent R_1, R_4, R_7, R_8, R_{11} or R_{14} into another substituent R_1, R_4, R_7, R_8, R_{11} or R_{14}

and, where required, converting the resulting compound of formula I obtained in free form to a salt form or vice versa, as appropriate.

8. (canceled)

9. (original) A pharmaceutical composition comprising a compound of formula I according to claim 1 in free form or pharmaceutically acceptable salt form in association with a pharmaceutically acceptable diluent or carrier therefor.

10. (original) A combination comprising a) an inhibitor of PKC and of T-cell activation and proliferation and b) at least one second agent selected from an immunosuppressant, immunomodulatory, anti-inflammatory, antiproliferative or anti-diabetic drug.

11. (original) A method for preventing or treating disorders or diseases mediated by T lymphocytes and/or PKC in a subject in need of such treatment, which method comprises administering to said subject an effective amount of a compound of formula I according to claim 1 or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof.